BRITISH COLUMBIA

Annual Report

For the Year Ending June 30, 1992

Providing
A Voice
For Seniors

SENIORS' ADVISORY COUNCIL

Annual Report

For the Year Ending June 30, 1992

Seniors' Advisory Council
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The Honourable Elizabeth Cull
Minister of Health and
Minister Responsible for Seniors
Parliament Building
Victoria, British Columbia
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Dear Ms. Cull:

I am pleased to present to you the second Annual Report of the Seniors' Advisory Council for the twelve-month period ending on June 30, 1992.

Yours truly,

Howard Petch
Chair

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A Message From The Chair

As Chair of the British Columbia Seniors' Advisory Council, it is once again my pleasure to preface the Council's Annual Report with some reflections on the year's activities and the future work of the Council. This has been Council's second year of activity and has been one that more than fulfilled the promise of the inaugural year.

With a firm foundation laid by the previous year's deliberations, Council began its second year of work with an ambitious list of issues and a fruitful session of strategic planning. Through last year's review of *Toward A Better Age: Report of the British Columbia Task Force on Issues of Concern to Seniors* and the results of its public forums, Council had identified a number of issues of importance. Thus, at its September 1991 meeting Council surveyed this issue list, assessed work being done on these issues in other jurisdictions, and determined what issues were most pressing in British Columbia and most appropriate for Council to deal with. The result of this process is a strategic workplan that will very likely carry Council into its third year of deliberation.

During the year ending June 30, 1992, the Seniors' Advisory Council held five meetings. At three of these meetings — those held in Victoria (February), Terrace (April), and Courtenay (June) — Council hosted public forums which were attended by representatives of the seniors' community and other interested individuals from these areas of the province. These forums provided opportunities for Council to hear about concerns from different regions of the province, to share Council's work-in-progress with the public, and to solicit specific views on a range of topics. The latter was accomplished by asking invited guests to address their remarks to specific questions in the areas of housing, financial security, the frail elderly, and issues regarding dying with dignity. In addition to its public forums, Council met with representatives of the five major provincial seniors' organizations at its November 1991 meeting in Richmond to hear about their issues and concerns. We want to thank all those who attended these meetings and made presentations and invite all concerned to continue to keep Council informed of seniors' needs.

In the fall of 1991, the Royal Commission on Health Care and Costs released its final report — *Closer To Home: The Report of the British Columbia Royal Commission on Health Care and Costs* (the Seaton Report). It was with great interest and enthusiasm that Council approached the task of responding to the recommendations of the

Seaton Report. Council recognizes that British Columbia has an excellent system of care and is confident that it will keep pace with changes in demographics, economics, and attitudes to health and health care. Council looks forward to continuing to assist and advise government as it responds to the Seaton Report.

This year, the work of two of Council's task forces culminated in the development and distribution of two documents — a discussion paper, *Assisting Seniors With Information: A Key To Independence*, and a position paper, *A Delicate Balance: Assisting Elderly Victims of Abuse and Neglect*. These papers consolidate Council's views on these two important areas of concern to seniors, make them public, and, in the former case, invite the response of stakeholders throughout the province. Council expects that major areas of concern in the future will result in the issuance of public documents such as these.

Both Council's mandate and Council's discussions point to the importance of the associated issues of ageism and misconceptions about seniors. Council recognizes that as a society we have tended to ignore, categorize, or marginalize our older people. Ageism is rooted in misconceptions and stereotyped perceptions of seniors; we must remember that seniors are a diverse group, as different from each other as are people of all ages. In all its activities, Council is committed to educating the public about aging and about the diverse and valuable individuals that we call seniors.

A positive step in the fight against ageism is ensuring that seniors are involved in the development of policy that will affect them. The *Towards A Better Age* Report comments that "the Council should act as a full contributor to the policy-making process, ensuring that Government takes into account the specific needs of seniors in the development of general policy and programs and those specifically designed for seniors." Thus, I am very pleased to see that in addition to Council's advice to government on policy issues, members of the Seniors' Advisory Council are making this a reality through their participation on a number of advisory bodies. Kyoshi Shimizu is a member of CMHC and BCHMC's Seniors' Housing Advisory Committee; Kay Stovold is a member of the British Columbia Mental Health Advisory Council; Jeanie Tronningsdal has been appointed member of both the Minister's Advisory Committee on the Royal Commission Report and the Pharmacare Advisory Committee; Mish Vadasz is a member of the Attorney General's Community Policing Advisory Committee.

Once again, I want to thank our eighteen members for their hard work and dedication to the Seniors' Advisory Council. We have learned a great deal and have

accomplished much this year on behalf of the seniors of British Columbia. I also want to extend thanks to the staff of the Office for Seniors — Faye Cosby, Margaret Farley, Catherine Luke, Joan McMahon, and May Wong — for their continued support with all aspects of Council's work, and to Paul Pallen, Executive Coordinator of the Office for Seniors, for his assistance and encouragement. A special note of thanks goes to Garry Curtis, Executive Director of Policy, Planning and Legislation, Ministry of Health, who facilitated Council's strategic planning session with great skill and patience. Council also wishes to acknowledge staff of the Ministry of Health's Communications and Education Branch for their support and assistance.

I would also like to thank our first alumni members, whose two year appointments ended on June 15, 1992. On behalf of Council I would like to thank Elizabeth Alfred, Frank Calder, Lois Cutler, Louis Gair, Bill Goldy, Sheila Jones, and Pritam Singh Lidder for their tremendous contributions to the work of Council. With them also go our very best wishes for success in their future endeavours.

In closing, let me affirm the Seniors' Advisory Council's commitment to advising government on issues of concern to British Columbia seniors and our enthusiasm for continuing our work to ensure that seniors in this province are full and equal members of our society.

Respectfully submitted,

Howard E Petch

Howard Petch
Chair

Council's Mandate

The Seniors' Advisory Council was established under the Seniors Advisory Council Act passed in June of 1989.

The members of Council are appointed by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council. Council consists of a chairperson, who shall be designated by the Minister Responsible for Seniors, and not fewer than fourteen other members.

Members of the Council are appointed for two- or three-year terms and may be re-appointed for one additional term. Members are selected with due consideration for regional representation, age, gender, ethnicity, and relevant experience.

The mandate of the Council is:

- to advise the Minister on current and future issues of concern to seniors of the Province;
- to represent the interests of seniors throughout the province;
- to maintain close communication links with major seniors' organizations and organizations involved in providing services to seniors.

The Council fulfils its mandate by:

- holding at least four Council meetings a year, at least two of which are held outside the Greater Victoria/Vancouver areas;
- meeting with seniors and community groups to share information and concerns;
- reporting to the Minister Responsible for Seniors at least once a year through an annual report and providing the Minister with advice as requested or necessary.

In this way, the Council identifies and examines the major issues concerning seniors. Through the work of committees and task forces, the Council develops recommendations which are forwarded to the Minister Responsible for Seniors.

The Seniors' Advisory Council is not a funding body, does not undertake case management or lobbying activities on behalf of individuals or organizations and is not involved in the delivery of programs.

The mandate and role of the Seniors' Advisory Council are described in a brochure which has been developed to publicize the Council. This brochure is available upon request from the Office for Seniors.

Membership Of Council 1991-92

Howard Petch, Chair
(Victoria) was president of the University of Victoria for fifteen years. During that time, he developed the university into an internationally-respected academic institution. He also demonstrated a sensitivity to the disabled, women, native people, rural residents, and other minority groups.

Elizabeth "Jail" Alfred
(Vancouver) of the Kwakiutl Nation, is President and Coordinator of the Vancouver Native Elders' Society. She has expertise in urban native elder issues.

Frank Calder
(Victoria) is an active member of the Nisga's Elders' Conference. For twenty-six years as M.L.A. he worked toward the resolution of the needs of natives in the British Columbia Northwest.

Lois J. Cutler
(Kamloops) is a producer of television shows focusing on seniors' nutrition. She coordinates "Plus 50" showcases, conducts tours, and is a dedicated community volunteer.

Louis A. Gair
(Terrace) is a member of the Seniors' Advisory Commission of Terrace and is also involved in the Provincial Emergency Program and the Old Age Pensioners' Organization.

Bill Goldy
(Ladysmith) an active, semi-retired, self-employed consultant who specializes in seniors' issues, tourism, and economic development.

Herman J. Griemann
(Sardis), a former R.C.M.P. Chief Superintendent, had served thirty-eight years when he retired in Winnipeg as head of criminal operations. His contacts with seniors have ranged from security and criminal vulnerability matters to delivery of meals-on-wheels.

Gerald Hodge
(North Vancouver) has taught at U.B.C., and Queens' and Simon Fraser Universities. He is a consultant on housing, transportation, and services for seniors living in small towns and rural areas.

Sheila Jones
(North Vancouver) has worked with seniors for twenty years and is now Chair of the Lionsview Seniors Planning Society. She is also active in "Seniors' Wellness" and other seniors' organizations at the local and provincial levels.

Pritam Singh Lidder
(Vancouver) is a seniors citizens' counsellor and president of the Mosaic Indo-Canadian Senior Men's Group. He has extensive involvement in the multicultural community.

Murray J. Mawhinney
(Prince George) is a past president of the 500-member Prince George Senior Citizens Activity Centre. As a past president and current member of the Senior Citizens' Housing Society, he is concerned with seniors' housing and transportation issues.

Willy Olesen
(Fort St. John) is administrator/chaplain of the Peace Lutheran Care Centre, an innovative complex for seniors that provides housing and multilevel care services.

Fred Pope
(West Vancouver), having retired after thirty-five years in the air transportation industry, has served on a number of boards in his community, including the North Shore Counselling Centre. His particular interests are seniors' housing and taxation.

A.G. (Gil) Seabrook
(Vernon) has had an extensive career in the broadcasting industry. Since 1988, he has been President of the Schubert Centre Society, a membership-owned facility which serves seniors through social, outreach, and meal programs.

Kyoshi Shimizu
(Victoria), formerly a social worker, is currently on the boards of several seniors' organizations, at the local, provincial, and national levels. She is also a resource person on matters related to senior Japanese Canadians. She is a member of the Seniors' Housing Advisory Committee.

Kay Stovold
(Vancouver) is a senior citizens' counsellor who is also active in a number of seniors' organizations. She chairs the Health Sub-Committee for the Vancouver Special Committee on Seniors.

Jeanie Tronningsdal
(Creston), a nurse, has associations with the three long-term care facilities in Creston. She has had an extensive career in health care administration and health organizations.

Mish Vadasz
(Vancouver), a social worker, is associated with the B.C. Council for the Family Seniors' Committee and the B.C. Coalition on the Prevention of Elder Abuse and Neglect. She teaches seniors' peer counselling and develops support groups for the B.C. Arthritis Society.

Members Resigned in 1991/92

M. Grace Young
(Parksville), a retired nurse, is coordinator of District 69 Senior Peer Counselling. She is also a Victims' Assistance counsellor working with the R.C.M.P. in Parksville.

Council's Task Forces And Committees

Elder Abuse Task Force

The mandate of the Elder Abuse Task Force is:

- to assist Council in fulfilling its role in addressing the issue of elder abuse and responding to the Minister's requests for advice.
- to recommend to the Council on the principles to guide the Province's response to elder abuse;
- to assist Council in reacting to and reviewing Government elder abuse initiatives;
- to provide the Council with information, advice, and recommendations on elder abuse.

The members of the Elder Abuse Task Force are:

Herman Griemann, Chair
Willy Olesen
Mish Vadasz
Murray Mawhinney
Gil Seabrook

Financial Security Task Force

The mandate of the Financial Security Task Force is:

- to address issues regarding seniors income and areas of poverty;
- to provide information, advice and recommendations to Council regarding current and future requirements of income security programs.

The members of the Financial Security Task Force are:

Sheila Jones, Chair
Howard Petch
Kyoshi Shimizu
Bill Goldy
Fred Pope

Information Task Force

The mandate of the Information Task Force is:

- to provide the Seniors' Advisory Council with advice on how to ensure, through effective information dissemination, that seniors and their families/caregivers have access to government/ community programs and services. This advice will in turn be communicated to Council as a whole where it will serve as the basis for Council's recommendations to the Minister.

The members of the Information Task Force are:

Gerald Hodge, Chair	Jall Alfred
Kay Stovold	Jeanie Tronningsdal

Liaison And Communications (Standing) Committee

The mandate of the Liaison and Communications Committee is:

- to prepare plans to develop an inter-relationship between Council, British Columbia seniors and their associations which will foster goodwill and credibility.

The members of the Liaison and Communications Committee are:

Kyoshi Shimizu, Chair	Frank Calder
Lois Cutler	Louis Gair
Bill Goldy	Sheila Jones

Council Activities 1991/92

Priority Issues

The Council's first major task — to review the recommendations contained in *Towards A Better Age: Report of the British Columbia Task Force on Issues of Concern to Seniors* — resulted in the identification of a number of priority seniors' issues. At its September 1991 meeting, the Council went through a strategic planning process to rank these issues according to their relative importance and to identify ways of approaching each issue. Council also confirmed the importance of its continuing work on issues that was started during the previous year — i.e., access to information, elder abuse, and financial security.

It was then agreed that the issues and strategies identified in Council's work plan would be dealt with in order of priority and that the plan would likely see Council through more than one year of deliberation. The following issues and actions are the constituents of Council's present and planned work.

Access To Information

It is a well-known fact that the many programs and services available to seniors can be very confusing. Indeed, the difficulty in finding the way into and through the service system prevents many seniors from getting the assistance they need to remain healthy and independent. It is also a well-documented fact that seniors with the greatest service needs are those least likely to have information about the services available. The difficulty in getting information about services and programs is magnified many times for seniors who experience further barriers such as language, culture, social isolation, poverty, or disability.

In 1990, Council appointed a task force to look more closely at the issue of information for seniors. This year, the task force recommended to the Minister that a proposal for a toll-free information line for seniors be developed, reviewed this proposal, and made recommendations to the Minister in this regard. The task force also advised the Office for Seniors on updating *Information for Seniors*, and developed a consolidated position on information and assistance for seniors. In March of 1992, the Seniors' Advisory Council distributed a discussion paper entitled, *Assisting Seniors With Information: A Key To Independence*. This paper makes recommendations

regarding seniors' access to information; it was sent to provincial seniors' organizations and information and referral centres throughout the province with the request for comment. The executive summary of this paper is reprinted on page 22 of this report.

The Information Task Force of Council also held a separate consultation with information providers in Terrace during the April 1992 meeting. Comments from this consultation confirmed support for Council's discussion paper and the need for both provincial and local information services. In May of 1992, the Task Force also met with the Lower Mainland Alliance of Information and Referral Systems, who supported Council's recommendations.

In its response to *Closer To Home: The Report of the British Columbia Royal Commission on Health Care and Costs*, Council supported the Commission's recommendations with respect access to information and services and emphasized Council's conviction that there should be a single entry mechanism into the service delivery system that includes needs' assessment, identification of appropriate resources, referral, advocacy or support to access services, case management, follow-up; such a system should be directly linked with information and referral services.

Abuse of the Elderly

Abuse of the elderly is any action/inaction which jeopardizes the health or well-being of an elderly person and may include: physical, psychological or emotional, financial, sexual, or medication abuse, or the violation of civil/human rights, or active or passive neglect.

The Council identified abuse and neglect of elderly people as a priority issue and established a task force to examine the issue more closely. This year, the work of that task force has resulted in a request to government that Council be advised of all elder abuse initiatives and be allowed to review any printed material. Subsequently, Council was asked to review and comment on the protocol document developed by Interministry Committee on Elder Abuse, "Principles, Procedures, and Protocols for Elder Abuse," which will soon be distributed throughout British Columbia.

The Task Force also reviewed the issue of adult protection legislation and Council recommended to the Minister that adult protection legislation not be developed at this time. In addition, Council has advised the Minister on the importance of education, training, protocol development, and prevention strategies aimed at all age groups.

In June of 1992, the Seniors' Advisory Council adopted a position paper entitled, *A Delicate Balance: Assisting Elderly Victims of Abuse and Neglect*. This paper consolidates Council's position on abuse and neglect of the elderly; with the Minister's permission, it was distributed to seniors' organizations and other concerned individuals throughout the province. The position articulated in this paper is summarized on page 24 of this report.

Financial Security

Recognizing that financial security is a problem at the heart of many seniors' issues, Council appointed a task force to explore and advise on the issue.

It has been well documented that social and health problems such as inadequate housing, isolation, depression, medication misuse, alcoholism, dental problems and, generally, poor physical health, are often directly correlated with low income.

The activities of this committee resulted in the submission of a brief regarding a proposed B.C. Retirement Savings Plan (October 1991) and a recommendation that the government increase the provincial Seniors Supplement rates to elevate the provincial minimum income level for seniors (February 1992).

The committee has examined issues related to poverty among older women and identified the following major concerns:

- income and labour force participation still low
- growth in single-parent families and broken marriages
- spouses' non-compliance with court orders for support
- growth in part-time, service sector, small business employment with little or no pension plan opportunities
- drop or loss of income after the death of or separation from a spouse.

The committee is currently exploring the elements of an ideal pension plan.

Housing

Seniors' housing was identified as the top priority issue at Council's strategic planning session in September of 1991.

The subject of seniors' housing is large and many faceted and includes such issues as: lack of affordable housing; availability of supportive housing (and other housing options); location of housing, and; housing design and accessibility (including provision for personal and building security). Council established an ad hoc Housing Task Force to determine a workplan to deal with housing issues. Task Force members include Gerald Hodge (Chair), Jall Alfred, Fred Pope, Kyoshi Shimizu, and Kay Stovold.

In November of 1991, Council met with representatives of B.C. Housing Management Commission.

In December of 1991, Council sent a letter to the Minister of Municipal Affairs, Recreation and Housing reiterating its concern "that housing for seniors be accessible in terms of location, price, and layout" and reminding the Minister of Council's proposal for the development of housing guidelines which it relayed to the Minister last year.

Council also requested a copy of the joint Ministry of Health/Ministry of Social Services and Housing study of supportive housing and is reviewing the first three parts of this study.

In March of 1992, Council called upon the Government to create a provincial strategy to develop more housing that is affordable for low-income British Columbians, including seniors. Council also requested a meeting with the Minister of Municipal Affairs, Recreation and Housing to determine the best strategy for ongoing work with that ministry. In addition, Council advised the Minister of Health and Minister Responsible for Seniors of its concern about the increasing numbers of incidents of excessive rental increases to seniors in lower income brackets.

At the public forums held in conjunction with the February, April, and June 1992 Council meetings, Council heard from presenters who confirmed the need for more affordable and accessible housing for seniors.

At its June 1992 meeting, Council decided to make a submission regarding affordable housing options to the Provincial Commission on Housing Options.

During the coming year, Council will be developing a position paper on housing.

Support for Family Caregivers

Council has noted that there is a great deal of work being done on this issue in many jurisdictions. During the coming year, Council will be reviewing this work as it becomes available and establishing its position with respect to this issue.

In its response to *Closer To Home: The Report of the British Columbia Royal Commission on Health Care and Costs*, Council supported the Commission's recommendations with respect to home care, but emphasized the need to support family caregivers with training and respite care.

Education and Training

Last year, this issue was raised in Council's submission to the Royal Commission on Health Care and Costs and in Council's letter to the University of Victoria Senate Committee on Health Education.

Council believes that it is important for all health workers who serve the elderly to understand the process of aging and how their caregiving may be adapted to the special needs of aging persons. In addition, Council believes that the present medical education system tends to concentrate on specialized, technologically-oriented procedures and that it should move towards a more holistic model of care which is more appropriate to the complex and chronic conditions to which the elderly are prone.

In the future, Council hopes to encourage educational institutions to ensure that there is an adequate supply of qualified professionals and non-professionals who are knowledgeable and skilled in addressing the special health needs of the elderly.

The Frail Elderly

Council noted that the Towards A Better Age Report did not adequately address the needs of the frail elderly. The frail elderly may be institutionalized and confused, as well as in poor health — this coincidence of conditions determines the particularly disadvantaged position of the frail elderly as invisible, silent, and unable to represent their own concerns. The frail elderly may also be living in their own homes, and while they may be mentally fit and only physically frail, may be isolated and unaware of services that could assist them.

Council consulted with the Continuing Advisory Sub-Committee on Care of the Elderly and Long Term Care of the B.C. Medical Association and met with representatives in November 1991.

Council included the needs of the frail elderly as a topic at its February 1992 public consultation and heard the concerns of families and care providers.

In its response to *Closer To Home: The Report of the British Columbia Royal Commission on Health Care and Costs*, Council supported the Commission's recommendations with respect to long term care in facilities. In addition, Council pointed out the importance of appropriate care for the cognitively impaired, of appropriate training for all long term care personnel, and the need for more flexibility in levels of care.

Misperceptions of Seniors

Ageism is discrimination based on age. In our society this term for age-related discrimination is usually used to refer to the elderly. Council recognizes that ageism is one of the most fundamental problems experienced by seniors and one which is very difficult to address. Thus, Council sees correcting misperceptions of seniors as an ongoing challenge, rather than a discrete activity, that it approaches in all its dealings with the public, with government, and with the media. Council also believes that its existence and activities are a positive force in changing society's attitudes to aging and the elderly.

Medication and Addiction Issues

The misuse or overuse of pharmaceuticals by some seniors is a serious problem. Elderly people have been identified as a high risk group who have unique problems in terms of the use of prescription drugs: age and number of drugs used affect an increase in adverse reaction rates; many geriatric hospitalizations are related to adverse drug reactions and errors in drug dosage; the use of mood-altering drugs by the elderly in institutions and; improper self-medication, specifically, with analgesics, vitamins and laxatives.

Council met with government representatives to discuss the Seniors' Drug Action Program and Alcohol and Drug Programs generally. Subsequent to this consultation, members of Council met with Ministry of Health officials to examine ways in which

Council could support their work on medication control and addiction issues. Council's Chair is also a member of a Ministry of Health and Ministry Responsible for Seniors coordinating committee on seniors' medication issues.

In its response to *Closer To Home: The Report of the British Columbia Royal Commission on Health Care and Costs*, Council supported the Commission's recommendations with respect to medication and the elderly and added that new prescriptions to patients, especially the elderly who are most susceptible to adverse reactions, should be in small amounts with no dispensing fee until results are determined. For example, initially prescribing a three-month supply of a medication and then observing adverse effects is not only wasteful but can be dangerous to a patient with a stockpile of unused medications on hand.

Medical Ethics and Seniors

This is a very broad, complex, and extensively researched area. The topic includes: the right to die; philosophical, medical, ethical, religious, and personal decisions about death and dying; extent of medical treatment; living wills and; legislation. These questions become more pressing as medical science and technology are able to prolong lives and are of particular concern to seniors who may desire more control over the circumstances of their death and to their families/friends/physicians who would like guidance in this area.

Council discussed this issue with particular reference to the Seaton Report's recommendations about the right to die and asked for comment at its public forums in February and April of 1992.

In June of 1992, Council met with members of the Ministry of Health's Special Advisory Committee On Ethical Issues In Health Care to discuss ethical issues in health care which have particular impact on seniors.

In its response to *Closer To Home: The Report of the British Columbia Royal Commission on Health Care and Costs*, Council appreciated the importance of Commission's recommendations with respect the right to die and commented on the issue of the living will and the role of hospital ethics committees.

Other Issues

Smoking Policy in Long-Term Care Facilities

Council was asked by Mr. Paul Pallan, Executive Director of the Continuing Care Division of the Ministry of Health and Ministry Responsible for Seniors, for its view on smoking policies in long-term care facilities. Council's position on this issue is that as long-term care facilities are homes for their residents, there should be designated indoor smoking areas with separate ventilation and safety features (fire alarms and fire-proof furniture). In addition, members pointed out that smoking materials should be limited to designated smoking areas and that there be programs to encourage residents to stop smoking.

Submission to the National Transportation Agency

In April of 1992, Council was invited to make a submission to the National Transportation Agency on inter-city motor coach transportation. Council surveyed four major inter-city bus companies in British Columbia concerning fares, accessibility, and assistance on busses and in terminals. Council's submission concluded that while motor coach companies in British Columbia have taken some obvious steps to improving the accessibility of their busses, there is need for further improvement.

Position on Constitutional Reform

In June of 1992, the Seniors' Advisory Council endorsed a joint letter from national and provincial seniors' advisory bodies to the Prime Minister of Canada and provincial premiers regarding constitutional reform. The letter outlined councils' concern that constitutional reform could result in significant changes to Canada's national health and social support systems which could lead to inconsistencies in programs and services available to seniors across the country. The letter called upon governments to work together to ensure the availability of programs and services that support the autonomy of seniors.

Mandatory Retirement

At Council's June 1992 meeting, the Minister requested Council's advice on the issue of mandatory retirement. Council looks forward to exploring this important issue and providing the requested advice within six months.

Council's Response To The Report On The Royal Commission On Health Care And Costs

In the fall of 1990, the Seniors' Advisory Council made a written submission to the Royal Commission on Health Care and Costs. This submission was formally presented to the Commission in January 1991 at its Victoria hearing.

In November of 1991, *Closer To Home: The Report of the British Columbia Royal Commission on Health Care and Costs* (the Seaton Report), was released and the government was called upon to respond to its recommendations. Council took the opportunity to review this complex report and its many recommendations and make its reaction known to the Minister of Health and Minister Responsible for Seniors. Highlights of Council's response to the Seaton Report are as follows.

As the Seniors' Advisory Council believes that health and wellness involve more than the traditional medical model of care, Council was encouraged by the Seaton Report's broad perspective on health that links education, environmental concerns, social welfare programs, income, and housing with health. Council supported the broad concept for which the Seaton Report is named — *Closer To Home* — and agreed with the recommended shift towards community-based health services built on local initiatives. Council was also very pleased that the report noted that the direction should be changed from curing of illness to prevention of disease and injury while maintaining high-quality curative services.

Council recognized the reasons for not organizing the report with a separate section devoted to seniors' issues and was pleased to see the recommendation that care of the elderly should be characterized by principles of autonomy and continuum of care. While Council appreciated the recommendation regarding the implementation of the Toward A Better Age Report recommendations, it emphasized that there are a number of health-related seniors' issues, further to those in the TABA Report, that Council has identified. These issues are: the special needs of ethnic seniors; the need for programs for urban native elders who have difficulty accessing services; older women; the needs of the frail elderly; spirituality in long term care facilities; sexual needs of seniors in long term care facilities; access to services, and; social and mental isolation.

Council also provided detailed comments on specific recommendation of a general nature and on recommendations with a significant impact on seniors.

Council looks forward to continuing to assist government in its review and implementation of the recommendations of the Seaton Report.

Assisting Seniors With Information: A Key To Independence

Executive Summary

The complex variety of services and benefits available to seniors results in many seniors and their families being unaware of the scope of services available or how to access them.

The Seniors Advisory Council identified the need to improve access to information as a priority and was asked by the former Minister of Health and Minister Responsible for Seniors to advise him on this matter.

In April 1991, Council recommended to the Minister that the new seniors' guide, *Information for Seniors*, be broadly distributed and that a proposal for a toll-free information line be developed. Council informed the Minister that recommendations for a comprehensive information service would follow.

Council has identified the following elements as essential to a comprehensive information service for seniors:

1. A central toll-free information resource;
2. Local information resources, many of which already exist in some communities;
3. Information that is appropriate and comprehensive;
4. On-going training for information providers;
5. Referral to service providers and follow-up of enquiries;
6. Provision for the special needs of some seniors;
7. A variety of print, visual and audio information that is well publicized.

The Seniors' Advisory Council recommends that:

1. the Province of British Columbia, in partnership with the Federal Government, regional and local governments, and community agencies, develop a comprehensive information service for seniors. Council further requests that Government consult with existing local information services in British Columbia by

circulating this report for their comment and input (Appendix I- Distribution List).

2. in developing a comprehensive information service, Council proposes that the following actions be taken, in addition to its previous recommendation to develop a proposal for a toll-free information line for seniors:

   a. a provincial seniors' information resource centre be established to:

      - operate the toll-free information line
      - establish, up-date, and maintain a comprehensive database of services and benefits for seniors
      - disseminate the database or portions thereof to local information resources in a form most appropriate to meet local needs
      - develop and maintain training material and facilitate training for information providers throughout the Province.

   b. encourage communities to develop local information resources where they are not formally present and support their development through such means as activation workshops.

   c. the guide, *Information for Seniors*, be updated regularly, be produced in the languages of the major ethnic groups in British Columbia, and that video and audio productions of the guide be made available in several languages.

3. funds required to improve the integration and comprehensiveness of information services be re-allocated from existing resources on the premise that appropriate, timely information can help avoid the use of more expensive and possibly inappropriate services.

4. council be kept informed of the progress on each of the above recommendations.

A Delicate Balance: Assisting Elderly Victims Of Abuse And Neglect

Council's Position In Brief

1. The Seniors' Advisory Council believes that abuse or neglect of elderly persons is unacceptable and that every effort must be made to eliminate this deviant behaviour from our society.

2. The Seniors' Advisory Council believes that the definition of abuse and neglect of an elderly developed by the Interministry Committee on Elder Abuse person should be accepted and used in British Columbia as a framework on which to base responses to the problem.

3. The Seniors' Advisory Council believes that the Government of British Columbia should encourage its ministries with relevant program responsibility and other community-based service agencies to collect data on the incidence and prevalence of abuse and neglect of elderly persons in order to better determine the dimensions of the problem in British Columbia.

4. The Seniors' Advisory Council believes that all intervention strategies for abuse and neglect of elderly person be characterized by a balanced attitude towards adults' right to self-determination and society's obligation to protect its members from abuse or neglect.

5. The Seniors' Advisory Council believes that the Government of British Columbia should encourage and support public education initiatives and assertiveness training/self-help groups to alert seniors to the problem of elder abuse and to encourage skills that may prevent incidents of elder abuse from occurring.

6. The Seniors' Advisory Council believes that the Government of British Columbia should encourage and support educational initiatives for professionals and non-professionals — including

elementary and secondary education on aging and family life; training programs for professionals who work with seniors and their families; etc.

7. The Seniors' Advisory Council believes that the Government of British Columbia, following its distribution of the provincial protocol guidelines, "Principles, Procedures, and Protocols for Elder Abuse," should continue to support and encourage communities throughout the province to develop and refine elder abuse protocols.

8. The Seniors' Advisory Council believes that, at this time, adult protection legislation not be introduced to address elder abuse. Council believes that energies are better directed towards elder abuse initiatives involving education and training, development of protocols, and data collection.

Public Relations And Public Education

In addition to publicity through media coverage of Council and its meetings, other media events have continued to make the public more aware of seniors' issues and of the Seniors' Advisory Council. The Council Chair has been regularly interviewed for radio, television, and newspaper in the communities where Council met during the last year. Notable issues picked up by the media at such times were abuse of the elderly, poverty and older women, and housing.

Liaison

An important aspect of Council's mandate is to maintain close communication links with major seniors' organizations and organizations involved in providing services to seniors. During 1991/92, individual members continued to fulfil this part of Council's mandate in their own regions of the province by meeting with various seniors' and service provider groups. All members were asked to submit written reports of their liaison activities at each regular Council meeting so that this information could be shared with the entire Council.

In October 1991, prior to the annual meeting of the Canadian Gerontology Association in Toronto, the Chair of Council met with his counterparts from seniors' advisory bodies from the federal government, other provinces, and territories to compare experiences, share information, and discuss future opportunities for collaboration and cooperation.

Council as a whole made efforts to ensure that it entered into and maintained communication with seniors' groups and at its November 1991 meeting in Richmond invited the following provincial seniors' organizations for a session of information-sharing and discussion of mutual concerns:

Army, Navy Air Force Veterans
B.C. Old Age Pensioners' Organization
Council of Senior Citizens Organizations
Royal Canadian Legion - Pacific Command
Senior Citizens' Association Of B.C.
Seniors Resources and Research Society

Representatives of Council also met with representatives of the Vancouver Special Committee on Seniors.

Conferences And Meetings

During 1991/92, Council was represented at the following conferences and meetings:

- Premier's Advisory Council on Persons With Disabilities Housing Forum, Vancouver (September 1991)
- Seniors' Wellness Networkers Annual Conference, Westbank (September 1991)
- Greater Vancouver Regional District Conference: Social Futures, Vancouver (September 1991)
- Senior Citizens Counsellor Conference, Penticton (October 1991)
- Aging In Canada and Japan, Victoria (October 1991)
- National Conference on Seniors and Transportation: Freedom To Move Is Life Itself, Winnipeg (October 1991)
- B.C. Association for Community Living Conference, Vancouver (October 1991)
- Provincial Advisory Councils on Seniors, Toronto (October 1991)
- Annual Scientific and Educational Meeting of the Canadian Association on Gerontology, Toronto (October 1991)
- Provincial Caregiver Conference, Victoria (November 1991)
- Canadian Radio and Telecommunications Commission (C.R.T.C.) meeting with Chair, Keith Spicer, Vancouver (February 1992)
- Affordable Housing For Seniors, Simon Fraser University (March 1992)
- International Federation of Ageing Forum "Together Today for Tomorrow," Vancouver (April 1992)
- Independence '92, Vancouver (April 1992)
- Eldervoice Conference, Victoria (May 1992)
- B.C. Senior Citizens Association Annual Meeting, Trail (May 1992)

Appendix A:
Recommendations To The Minister

June 30, 1991 to June 30, 1992

THE SENIORS' ADVISORY COUNCIL RECOMMENDS that the Government create a provincial strategy to develop more housing that is affordable for low-income British Columbians, including seniors.

THE SENIORS' ADVISORY COUNCIL RECOMMENDS to Government an increase in the Seniors Supplement rate to a level which would ensure that seniors who depend solely on public assistance programs need no longer live in poverty.

THE SENIORS' ADVISORY COUNCIL IS PARTICULARLY CONCERNED about the high incidence of excessive rental increases for apartments where seniors live and asks that the Minister of Health and Minister Responsible for Seniors convey Council's concerns to her colleague, the Honourable Robin Blencoe, Minister of Municipal Affairs, Recreation and Housing.

THE SENIORS' ADVISORY COUNCIL RECOMMENDS that the Province of British Columbia, in partnership with the Federal Government, regional and local governments, and community agencies, develop a comprehensive information service for seniors. Council further requests that Government consult with existing local information services in British Columbia by circulating this report for their comment and input.

THE SENIORS' ADVISORY COUNCIL RECOMMENDS that, in developing a comprehensive information service, the following actions be taken, in addition to its previous recommendation to develop a proposal for a toll-free information line for seniors:

a. a provincial seniors' information resource centre be established to:

   - operate the toll-free information line
   - establish, up-date, and maintain a comprehensive database of services and benefits for seniors
   - disseminate the database or portions thereof to local information resources in a form most appropriate to meet local needs
   - develop and maintain training material and facilitate training for information providers throughout the Province.

b. encourage communities to develop local information resources where they are not formally present and support their development through such means as activation workshops.

c. the guide, *Information for Seniors*, be updated regularly, be produced in the languages of the major ethnic groups in British Columbia, and that video and audio productions of the guide be made available in several languages.

THE SENIORS' ADVISORY COUNCIL RECOMMENDS that the funds required to improve the integration and comprehensiveness of information services be re-allocated from existing resources on the premise that appropriate, timely information can help avoid the use of more expensive and possibly inappropriate services.

THE SENIORS' ADVISORY COUNCIL RECOMMENDS that it be kept informed of the progress on each of the above recommendations regarding information for seniors.

THE SENIORS' ADVISORY COUNCIL RESOLVES AND RECOMMENDS the following on the issue of abuse and neglect of the elderly:

- that abuse or neglect of an elderly persons is totally unacceptable and that every effort must be made to eliminate this deviant behaviour from our society.

- that the definition of elder abuse and neglect in this document be generally accepted and used in B.C.

- that the Government of British Columbia encourage its ministries with relevant program responsibility and other community-based service agencies to collect data on the incidence and prevalence of abuse and neglect of elderly persons in order to better determine the dimensions of the problem in British Columbia.

- that the Government of British Columbia, following its distribution of the provincial protocol guidelines, "Principles, Procedures, and Protocols for Elder Abuse," continue to support and encourage communities throughout the province to develop and refine elder abuse protocols.

- that the Government of British Columbia not develop adult protection legislation at this time. Rather, Council recommends that efforts continue to be directed towards elder abuse initiatives involving data collection, development of protocols, and education and training.

- that all intervention strategies for abuse and neglect of elderly person be characterized by a balanced attitude towards adults right to self-determination and society's obligation to protect its members from abuse or neglect.

- that the Government of British Columbia encourage and support public education initiatives and assertiveness training/self-help groups to alert seniors to the problem of elder abuse and to encourage skills that may prevent elder abuse.

- that the Government of British Columbia encourage and support professional and non-professional education initiatives — including elementary and secondary education on aging and family life; training programs for professionals who work with seniors and their families, etc.

For Further Information On
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